(c) and (d) MES is a mixed organisation composed of civilian and army personnel. It is necessary to retain this composition because of the operational role assigned to MES.

Engineering Officers for Civil Functions

3967. CHAUDHARY CHUNNILAL : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether corps of engineer officers trained for combat are being largely utilised in organisations like MES, DGBR, Survey of India, CME, in civil functions;

(b) the rank-wise number of army engineers with commissioned service of more than twenty years as on 31st March, 2000;

(c) the rank-wise number of officers out of (b) above who have served more than ten years outside the combat duties; and

(d) the action being taken to limit the duties of army engineers to combat duties to meet shortages in Engineer Regiments and simultaneously keeping them ever prepared for eventualities as recommended by Fifth Central Pay Commission ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) No, Sir. Army Engineers are trained to carry out engineering and combat tasks in support of military operations. As a part of their role, these officers are required to serve in Engineer units, MES, DGBR and CME which are a part of the Corps of Engineers. Army Engineers also serve in survey of India on tenure basis as per the laid down procedure. However, Army Engineers were being permanently seconded to the Survey of India earlier, but the same has been stopped since 1985. Presently, 68 officers permanently seconded to Survey of India are in service.

(b) Rank-wise number of Army Engineers with commissioned service of more than 20 years as on 31st March, 2000 is an under :—

(i) Lt. Gen.-04

(ii) Maj. Gen.-21

(iii) Brig.-95

(iv) Col.-338

(v) Lt. Col.-215

(vi) Lt . Col. (TS)-213

(vii) Maj.-42

(c) and (d) Do not arise in view of reply to part (a) and (b) of the Question.

Security of Andaman Islands

3968. DR. RAJA RAMANNA : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state whether Government taking into account the importance of the Andaman Islands, are considering increased security of these Islands, so that the traffic routes of our mercantile ships around it, are protected from buzzing and piracy by unfriendly countries ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : The Navy and the Coast Guard, individually and jointly, maintain regular surveillance in the seas around the Andaman & Nicobar Islands by deploying ships and aircrafts. Adequate preventive measures against buzzing and piracy of the ships at sea in the area have been instituted. No such incident has also been reported to the Navy or the Coast Guard in the recent past.

Aggressive Patrolling along LoC

3969. SHRI C. M. IBRAHIM : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that while Pakistan has built up forces along the Line of Control, with positioning of its reserve brigades on Pak side of the LoC, the Indian army was asked to lay off aggressive patrolling on LoC on the eve of US President's visit to the sub-continent;

(b) whether the Pak move to position their reserve forces was considered a prelude to another Kargil like venture;

(c) if so, the reasons for lay off of effective patrolling; and

(d) what steps have since been taken for effective security of Indian side of LoC and to prevent any Pak-misadventure ?